

Closter, N.J. Dec. 24, 1879.

Dear Mr. Watson - Since receiving your last letter I have been busy fully half my time, trying to get the Hepaticae in a presentable shape. Frequently I regretted that I had undertaken the job, for this reason only, because I have no natural genius for such work. I find it impossible for me to arrange the Hepaticae in a rational or consistent order. Probably the reason that we have so few attempts at systematizing them published, is because others, like myself, after trying ^{their hand at} it give ^{up the job} up in disgust. This is why my proposed Synopsis Hep. Amer. hangs fire. I am not able to arrange the genera consistently & I know of no one who has come anywhere near doing it. Lindberg has attempted it. His latest attempt seen by

me was made in 1878, but
there are some glaring defects
in this, which he has written me
about, What he can't unravel
in this line, is not to be unravelled!
I have followed him in the main.

I send the Ms. in a
very bad shape, for the reason
that I have written & rewritten
some of it several times over
-changing the order of the

and want you to see it before making any more changes

Genus & c. You will
please explain ~~the MS.~~
I state distinctly wherein
it does not suit & return
it - & I will do the best I can
with it. I have no doubt it is
much too long. I never saw the
Flora of California & of course could
not be guided by anything in it.
(You suggest that the way the Order
Rosaceae in that work ~~is~~ down
^{would be}
~~is~~ about the right thing.)

I would like the Ms. ~~&~~
returned after you are done
with it as some of it, was
not copied from My Synops. Ms.
but ~~some~~ ^{the} sheets belonging to
it taken & incorporated in
this.

I can abbreviate the
thing very much if you
should desire it, but I could
not do it until I had first
written it out. I find it more
of a job - to write short descriptions than
long ones! The faculty of being
brief is as rare as it is desirable.
It is a trademark of genius. ~~and~~
~~difficult~~ - "The soul of wit". I suppose
it will bother the printers to read my writing.
I cannot write a legible hand, only for a few
minutes at a time - a nervous defect, ~~and~~
hereditary ~~as~~ as I have always been ^{probably}

Very truly yours,

Coe J. Austin.